

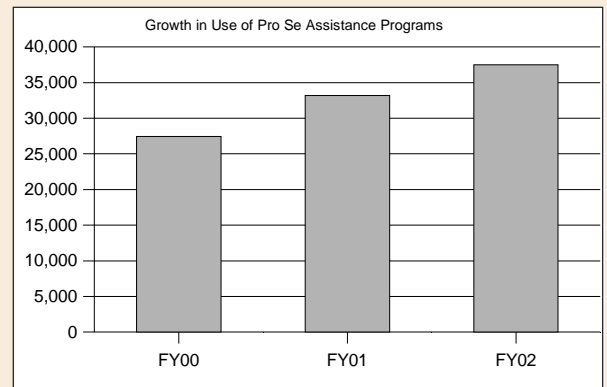
Pro Se Best Practices

PRO SE PROVIDERS, COORDINATORS MEET TO DISCUSS DRAFT DOCUMENT

In response to the growing demand for *pro se* assistance – requests have increased by 36 percent in two years in Maryland – the Department of Family Administration (DFA) and the Maryland Legal Assistance Network (MLAN) have proposed a set of best practices for court-sponsored *pro se* programs.

On December 2, 2002, the Pro Se Best Practices Committee convened a meeting of statewide *pro se* providers and family support services coordinators to review draft best practices. The meeting was a follow-up to a joint meeting held in November of 2001, which identified the need for best practice guidelines for these highly used programs.

continued on p.7



From the *Family Divisions & Family Services Programs Annual Report, FY-2002*. Department of Family Administration, Administrative Office of the Courts, December 1, 2002, p. 17.

CJAC GRANTS PROVIDE MORE CHILD ADVOCATES

DFA, CASAs to Receive \$213,000

The Department of Family Administration has been awarded a \$213,000 grant that will be used to fund CASA programs in Baltimore City and Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Frederick, Harford, Montgomery and Prince George's counties and the lower Eastern Shore.

The three-year grant was awarded by the Children's Justice Act Committee of the Maryland State Council on Child Abuse and Neglect. Frederick County CASA will receive funding for new program development; the other jurisdictions will receive funding to expand existing programs.

The goal of the grant is to increase the number of children served through the CASA programs by expanding volunteer recruitment, training and supervisory capabilities. The grant will allow the programs to provide service to 65 additional CINA children each year for three years – 195 additional children during the three-year period. State-wide, only 15 percent of children in the jurisdictions that have CASA programs are being served by CASA volunteers. The grant funding will enable the CASA programs to increase the number of children served statewide by 30 percent during the three-year grant cycle.

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IT'S ALL ABOUT THE KIDS . . .

Pamela Cardullo Ortiz, Executive Director



Our language develops in curious ways. In earlier times, words were combined with one another to form new words. In our era, new words are formed by the creation of acronyms – single initials strung together to form new “words.” Only a literate, reading culture could create new words with initials. After all, you have to know how to spell to create or understand an acronym. I am not a linguist, but I have studied enough languages (Spanish, German, Medieval Latin – none with great success) to be amazed at how we have changed in our use of language.

Just think – without acronyms we would have no ATM machines, we couldn’t post FAQs on our URL (obviously there would be no IT); you could never finish that Ph.D., or at least you wouldn’t have to do it ASAP; NATO (which wouldn’t exist) could never get the radar or lasers it needed to execute its missions; of course there would be no flak and no WMDs, so maybe we would be better off after all.

Sadly for us, however, our heavy reliance on acronyms also hides the true meaning of the words they embody. I am thinking of two acronyms in particular that we use every day in our work – CINA and TPR. They are worth repeating *sans* initials – “Child in Need of Assistance” and “Termination of Parental Rights.”

You have read in these pages in issues past of the many initiatives the Judiciary has undertaken to improve the handling of CINA and TPR cases. These efforts are important – not because the Judiciary wants to look good when it measures itself against objective standards, but because the efficient handling of CINA and TPR cases matter in the life of a child.

A child who has been through the CINA process – been removed from the care of a parent, placed with a relative or in foster care, anticipated and then sat through shelter care, adjudication, disposition, and child-in-placement review hearings – learns that she may be eligible for adoption, may have the opportunity to be part of a new family. Papers are filed, meetings are held, visits are scheduled. All the child knows is that “they” are working on it.

Well — *we* are “they.” There may be reasons that TPR cases are not concluded within 180 days, as required by law. But when we are unable to conclude a case in time, a child waits. A child suffers. A child is in turmoil. A child who is not in control of the process. When we have the opportunity to take action to improve our handling of these cases, we should do so. Because it’s not a CINA or a TPR. It’s a child.



family matters

We welcome your comments and contributions.
Please call or write: Pamela Cardullo Ortiz, Exec. Director
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Serving Victims of Domestic Violence

Through the Special Project Grant program, the Department of Family Administration has placed a special emphasis on ensuring that victims of domestic violence can effectively access the family justice system. During Fiscal Year 2002, a number of grants were awarded to organizations that provide safety planning, legal advice and representation to victims of family violence. May of these programs, including the several Protective Order Advocacy Representation Projects (POARP), provide on-site support within the courthouse. By serving the public from within the courthouse, these local advocacy groups are able to eliminate many of the obstacles that preclude victims from obtaining protection and relief.

The charts reflect the types of services offered through these grant-funded programs. Statistical reporting was modified during FY02 to improve the quality of data collected. Because of these changes, the charts below reflect data for the *second half* of FY02.

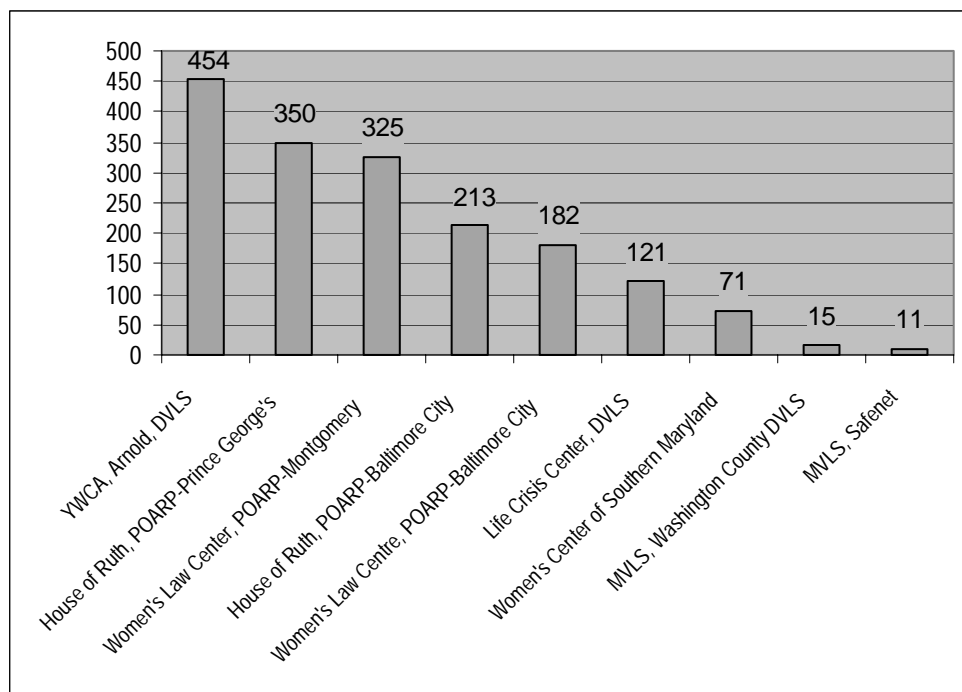


Figure 1. No. of Cases Accepted by Grantee (3rd & 4th Quarters, FY02)

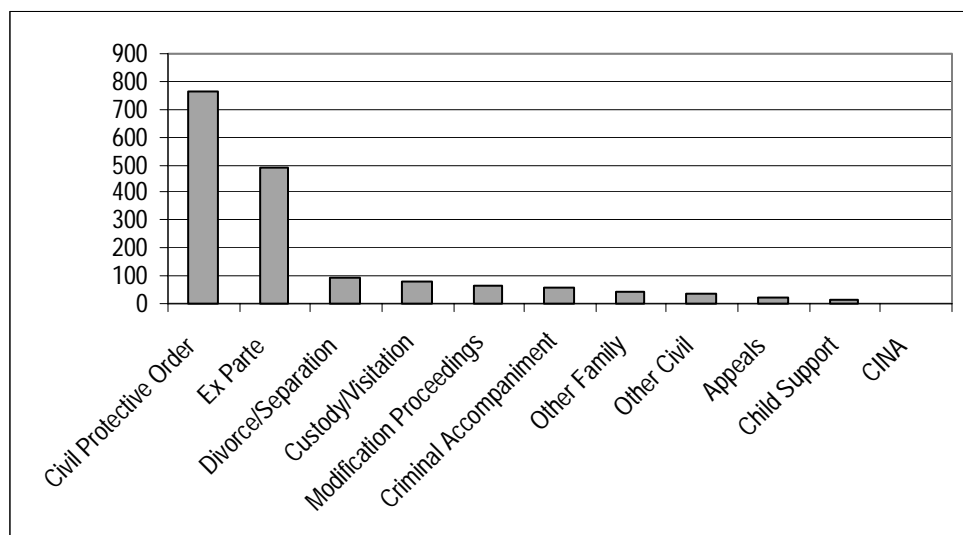


Figure 2. Type of Legal Problem Addressed (3rd & 4th Quarters, FY02)



2 SJI Scholarships Available for Out-of-State Training 3

Scholarships are available for judges and court managers to attend out-of-state training. Up to \$1,500 may be awarded by the State Justice Institute (SJI) for travel and tuition. These scholarships are provided only for training and courses offered outside the recipient's home state.

The State Justice Institute, established in 1984, awards grants to improve the quality of justice in State courts. Scholarships are awarded throughout the year on a rotating basis.

Who can apply? Scholarships are available for full-time state trial court judges and appellate court judges. Applications will also be accepted from full-time professional court personnel with management responsibilities. Scholarships are *not* available, unfortunately, for masters, commissioners or law clerks.

What kinds of programs qualify? Awards will be made for courses designed to enhance the skills of new or experienced judges and court managers. The program must also focus on one of SJI's special interest categories or be offered by a recognized graduate program for judges or court managers. SJI's special interest categories are:

- Improving public confidence in the courts
- Education and training for judges and other key court personnel
- Dispute resolution and the courts
- Application of technology
- Court planning, management and financing
- Substance abuse
- Children and families in court
- Improving the courts' response to domestic violence
- Relationship between state and federal courts

The annual or mid-year meeting of a state or national organization does not qualify as an out-of-state educational program for the purpose of this scholarship program, even though it might include workshops or training sessions.

How can I apply? A copy of the SJI grant guidelines is available on-line, along with all relevant application forms, at www.statejustice.org (go to FY 2003 Application link). The Department of Family Administration will assist judges and court managers in applying for a scholarship if the request is made at least 30 days prior to the application deadline. Please contact Pamela Ortiz at 410-260-1580 if you would like assistance in submitting an application.

Deadlines. Applications will be considered by SJI on the following schedule:

-  **Between January 3 – March 3, 2003** for programs beginning between April 1 and June 30, 2003.
-  **Between April 1 – June 2, 2003** for programs beginning between July 1 and September 30, 2003.
-  **Between July 7 – August 29, 2003** for programs beginning between October 1 and December 31, 2003.
-  **Between October 1 – December 1, 2003** for programs beginning between January 1 and March 31, 2004.

BALTIMORE CITY JUVENILE CLERKS PROVIDE THE LONG VIEW

Several issues ago, we honored James Benton for his tireless commitment and dedication to the Juvenile Division of the Circuit Court for Baltimore City and to the young people who have passed through its doors. Since then, we have had occasion to take a closer look into the operation of the Juvenile Division and discovered a wealth of knowledge, dedication and commitment, particularly in the cadre of its seasoned employees.

Throughout his many years of service to the courts, Mr. Benton has been assisted by a core group of nine persons, who collectively have committed 269 years of service to the Juvenile Division. Individually, Dora Williams has 35 years of service, Diane Alston, Nora Booker, and Deborah Wright each have 31 years, Angela Brown has 30 years, and Dannette Hardy has 29 years of service. Judy Ostreicher has provided the court with 28 years of service, while Claudette Robert-Jones and Jacqueline James have each given 27 years. Their services have ranged from secretary to docket clerk to courtroom clerk and each has assisted with the integration of technology into the courtroom.

While many of us struggle with what it is we want to do with our lives, most of these employees knew they wanted to serve their fellow man in some way. Hence, upon graduating from high school in the late sixties and early seventies, many of them joined the Clerk's Office for the Circuit Court for Baltimore City. That was at a time when automation technology was on the cutting edge. Over the years, Judicial Information Systems has worked with the Juvenile Division in the area of technological enhancement. In fact, this office was in the forefront and became the recipient of one of the first automated case processing systems in Maryland.

The core group of nine employees has remained steadfast through each transformation — as the clerk's office traversed through the original manual case management process to the first automated case



*Front: Judy Ostreicher. Back (l-r):
Dannette Hardy, Angela Brown, Nora
Booker, Claudette Robert-Jones,
Deborah Wright, Dora Williams, and
Diane Alston.*

management system created in 1976 to the current case management system, Quest. Quest enables judges and masters to review case files on line and to produce court orders while providing clerks with the ability to schedule cases in the courtroom — a long way from the manual processes and mounds of paper that consumed their workday thirty years ago.

The Honorable Martin P. Welch, Juvenile Judge for the Circuit Court for Baltimore City, upon commenting on the core group of nine, stated that "The collective experience and wisdom of this group of employees is invaluable to every juvenile judge and master. The willingness of these employees to train and break-in new judges and masters to the courtroom processes and the technology are a great asset to the Juvenile Court."

So often, the worth of employees is not articulated until they leave, either through retirement, change of jobs or death. There is an old adage that simply states "Give people their flowers while they can still smell them." Imagine what the workplace would be like if we honored our employees, the true nuts and bolts of any organization, while they truly could appreciate it. *Family Matters* salutes these nine employees for 269 years of dedication and commitment to the Circuit Court for Baltimore City and the attorneys and other officials with whom they have come into contact; but most importantly for their tireless efforts to ensure that the young people and their families are treated with dignity and respect when they enter the halls of justice.

FCCIP TO CONDUCT FOLLOW-UP ASSESSMENT

The Foster Care Court Improvement Project (FCCIP) has recently contracted with the American Bar Association Center On Children and the Law (ABA) to study and evaluate the progress of the efforts made since the project's initial assessment five years ago.

The FCCIP was established in 1995 with a federal Court Improvement Project grant. Initial funding was used to assess how the Judiciary was processing its Child in Need of Assistance (CINA) and related Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) and adoption cases. A report containing 39 recommendations was completed in the Fall of 1997. The FCCIP commenced implementing the recommendations in November 1997. The new study will evaluate whether accomplishments have been made, and if so, whether these accomplishments have addressed the identified areas of concern outlined in the 1997 report.

The 1997 report recommended: implementation of a uniform automated data system that would enable the courts to monitor CINA and TPR cases for legal compliance and case management; judicial training in

the handling of CINA and related cases; adequate representation of all parties; establishment of uniform terminology and procedure throughout the state; revision of the CINA statute; development of case management plans for CINA and TPR cases; and the adequacy of personnel resources (judges, masters, support staff, and attorneys).

Stakeholders involved in CINA and related cases will have an opportunity to provide input to the assessment team. These stakeholders will include members of the FCCIP, judges, masters, DSS and DHR staff, other court personnel, and attorneys who represent children, parents, and the departments of social services. Staff from the ABA will meet with court personnel from every jurisdiction in Maryland, observe hearings, review statistical data and analysis, and conduct file reviews. Some stakeholders may be asked to complete questionnaires.

The evaluation is scheduled to be completed by July 2003, at which time the final report will be made available.

Regional Conferences

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IN FAMILY CASES

The Department of Family Administration is sponsoring four one-day regional conferences that will address the identification of and response to child sexual abuse in family cases. The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA) will host the conferences with presenters including Ann Haralambie, Esq., a nationally recognized expert on child sexual abuse in the court system, Joan Zorza, Esq., author and advocate for women and child victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, and Melissa Lane McDermott, LCSWC, program manager of the Listening Place, Howard County Child Advocacy Center and adjunct professor at University of Maryland School of Social Work. Conferences will be held on the following schedule:

January 31, 2003	Annapolis
March 14, 2003	Salisbury
March 21, 2003	Frederick
April 25, 2003	Baltimore City

To register, or for more information, contact Robin Warren at MCASA (410) 974-4507.

Pro Se Providers, Coordinators Meet

continued from p.1

The Pro Se Best Practices Committee examined the usage of Maryland's programs, national trends and individual court practices to draft a comprehensive document that addressed:

1. Program operations,
2. Access, language and literacy,
3. Service delivery,
4. Situation analysis and referrals,
5. Program development,
6. Integrated delivery system,
7. Outreach and community education, and
8. Data collection and evaluation.



The draft Pro Se Best Practices are available at MLAN's website www.mdjustice.org. The final document will be provided at both the MLAN site and at the DFA website www.courts.state.md.us/family. The final document will be forwarded to the Committee on Family Law for consideration.

In addition to best practices, the committee has recommended a change to the Maryland Rules modeled after the American Bar Association (ABA) Model Rule 6.5, adopted by the ABA Ethics 2000 Project. The change addresses the potential conflict of interest that can occur if the *pro se* program, the attorney serving the program, or the firm or legal services provider that provides the attorney has represented a party with an adverse interest.

At this time, if the attorney providing advice in the program has a conflict (or imputed conflict), the attorney may not provide services to the person seeking assistance, regardless of whether the attorney remembers any identifying information. In many smaller jurisdictions, conflicts require individuals to travel to another county to receive services or to wait until another attorney is available, which may be as much as a week later. The proposed rule change would allow the program to provide legal advice to anyone seeking services as long as the attorney providing the services does not have actual knowledge of a conflict.



FD/FSP Annual Report Available

Copies of the *Family Divisions & Family Services Programs Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2002* are now available. Complete with up-to-date statistics on family services, *pro se* appearances, and demographic data on co-parenting, *pro se* and domestic violence program participants, the report details the accomplishments of the Maryland circuit courts in serving families and children. The report may be viewed or downloaded from www.courts.state.md.us/family/annualreport02.pdf. To request a hard copy, contact Lisa Craft at lisa.craft@courts.state.md.us (410-260-1580).



Multi-Disciplinary Meetings

Agencies Collaborate on Joint CINA Trainings

For the first time, all individuals who work on CINA cases will come together to compare notes and participate in a joint educational program. The program is designed to ensure that courts, agency attorneys, child counsel, and parents' counsel are operating with the same information, so that Maryland is in compliance with federal regulations governing child protection matters.

Foster Care Court Improvement Project (FCCIP) staff, working with Vanita Taylor from the Office of the Public Defender, Carol Ann Smith from the Attorney General's Office, and Robyn Scates from the Maryland Legal Services Program, have embarked on an exciting and unique venture to coordinate six regional multi-disciplinary meetings. The FCCIP's primary mission is to improve the courts' processing of cases involving the foster care system by means of a myriad of initiatives and programs.

Taylor, Smith and Scates are responsible for the on-going training of attorneys involved in a CINA case. Ms. Taylor is the chief attorney for the CINA Division in the Public Defender's Office, which is responsible for representing parents. Ms. Smith is responsible for the training of all the attorneys who represent local departments of social services. Finally, Ms. Scates is responsible for overseeing the training of attorneys who have contracted with the state to represent children. This is the first time these agencies have come together to offer a joint educational program.

Program planners hope to bring a diverse group of CINA stakeholders – including judges, masters, attorneys, court administrators, clerks, family support services coordinators and CASA representatives – together. The planners are excited about the opportunity to have this diverse group discuss the impact of various CINA regulations, statutes and policies on the different agencies as well as the efficient, timely and effective handling of cases. The exchange across discipline lines should lead to a very lively and informative discussion.



The multi-disciplinary meetings are scheduled on consecutive Friday afternoons beginning mid-January and continuing through the end of February. The six regional meetings are scheduled as follows:

January 17th	Baltimore City
January 24th	Howard County to host Carroll, Frederick and Montgomery counties
January 31st	Harford County to host Baltimore and Cecil counties
February 7th	Calvert County to host Anne Arundel, Charles, Prince George's and St. Mary's counties
February 14th	Talbot County to host Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, Somerset, Wicomico and Worcester counties
February 21st	Washington County to host Allegany and Garrett counties

The meetings will focus primarily on the March 2000 AFSA regulations and the federal audits that have resulted from the new regulations. Specific emphasis will be placed on the Children and Family Services review scheduled for November 2003. There is much to do in preparation for this important federal audit of Maryland's foster care system. Each of the CINA stakeholders has a role to play to ensure Maryland's most vulnerable citizens, our children, continue to receive all the federal funding they are entitled to receive. It is important that we come together as a state to put our best efforts forward during this crucial statewide and system wide audit.

For more information, or to register, contact Althea Stewart Jones at 410-260-1296.

The Welcome Wagon Rolls Again!

Miller, Omisore Join DFA

The Department of Family Administration would like to extend a hearty welcome to Alexandra "Alex" Miller, Esq. Alex joined the department from the State's Attorney's Office in Baltimore City and serves as a new family services administrator. In her new role, Alex will be overseeing special projects grants within the Family Administration. Her primary focus will be on domestic violence-related projects to include the court-based protective order advocacy and representation projects. Her other duties will include serving as a liaison for the Judiciary on domestic violence issues affecting the courts and staffing the Domestic Violence Subcommittee of the Committee on Family Law.

Alex earned her law degree from the University of Baltimore, Maryland. She says that one of her most rewarding experiences has been helping the indigent as a pro bono attorney with the Maryland Volunteer Lawyer Service.

When she isn't busy with work or volunteer activities, Alex enjoys biking, swimming, and socializing. She is multi-lingual, fluent in both French and Spanish.

Please join us in welcoming Alex. For more information regarding the special projects grants and domestic violence related projects, please contact Alex at 410-260-1727.



Alexandra Miller



Temitope Omisore

The Foster Care Court Improvement Project is happy to welcome Mr. Temitope "Temi" Omisore to the Department of Family Administration. Temi began as the FCCIP's database support technician in November. Formerly a systems analyst with Telecommunications Systems in Annapolis, Temi's new responsibilities include the collection of data and generation of statistical reports for the FCCIP. He will play an integral role in assisting the FCCIP in its computer and database operations, and will also serve on the FCCIP - Statistics Oversight Subcommittee.

Temi hails from Lagos, Nigeria and is fluent in Yoruba. He moved to Maryland in 1991. Temi is an avid basketball fan and watches as many games as time will allow. He also enjoys listening to hip hop and reggae music and one day aspires to become active in music production and studio engineering. Temi says that the accomplishment that he is most proud of is obtaining his degree in computer science from the University of Maryland in 2000.

He hopes to attend the MBA program at Johns Hopkins. The FCCIP team is excited to have such an ambitious player on board. Welcome Temi!!

NEW MASTER IN PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY

Judy Lynn Woodall

Prince George's County Circuit Court is pleased to announce the hiring of Judy Lynn Woodall as Master of the Family Division. Woodall, who lives in Bowie, received her Juris Doctor in May 1986 from the Howard University School of Law in Washington, D.C. During her career she has worked in the Office of the State's Attorney for Prince George's County as the chief of the narcotics unit. In 1995, she joined the law firm of Reagan Associates as a staff attorney, where she had a general practice in criminal, family, civil (small claims), landlord and tenant, immigration and bankruptcy law. Since 1984, she has taught courses in Business Organization, Public Service Ethics and Criminal Procedure at Howard University School of Law. Woodall looks forward to an exciting career with the court and welcomes the opportunity to serve the citizens of Prince George's County.



Master Lynn Woodall

COMMITTEE ON FAMILY LAW UPDATE

At the time this issue went to press, the Committee on Family Law had held two meetings since its September retreat. See *Family Matters*, Vol. 2, No. 4, p. 10.

At the October meeting, Althea Stewart Jones, Director of the Foster Care Court Improvement Project, presented the proposed revised TPR statute. The revised statute makes changes to Maryland's laws governing termination of parental rights cases. The committee approved and endorsed the proposed statute. The statute will be part of the Judiciary's legislative package in the 2003 session.

Judge Dexter Thompson, Circuit Court for Cecil County, and Jennifer Keiser, deputy director, Department of Family Administration, presented the Report of the Child Support Subcommittee. That report detailed recommendations on how to make enforcement of child support more effective through the courts, including a recommended change to make it easier and more effective to use criminal contempt in these cases. The Committee on Family Law voted to support the recommendations at its November meeting.



Judge Holland reported that the Custody Subcommittee had met over the summer to review the UCCJEA. The subcommittee had recommended that the statute be supported if it is filed again this year. They did recommend two specific changes be included in any future version enacted.

At the committee's November meeting, members discussed and identified various tasks to be priorities for committee action over the coming year. Those tasks include: 1) development of a family law handbook for unrepresented persons; 2) development of time standards best practices for family case types; 3) providing legal advice/information training for court staff; 4) development of bench cards and checklists on family law topics' and 5) assessment of the educational needs of judges, masters and court professionals working in the family area and developing training curricula.

Finally, Pamela Ortiz presented legislation that the State Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (SC-CAN) plans to propose this year, as well as proposed legislation prepared by the Child Support Enforcement Administration.

RECENT FAMILY LAW DECISIONS

In a new feature, *Family Matters* will highlight recent reported decisions of the Maryland Court of Appeals and Court of Special Appeals that address family law issues. Copies of reported opinions are available on-line at <http://www.courts.state.md.us/opinions.html>.

Court of Appeals

Adoption/Guardianship

In re: Adoption/Guardianship No. 6Z000045, No.18, September Term, 2002. Reported December 10, 2002. Opinion by Battaglia, J. Raker and Wilner, JJ. concur.

Waiver of Parental Notice Requirement in Guardianship Proceedings Under Sections 5-322(c) and 5-322(d) of the Family Law Article of the Maryland Code. Held: A mother was deprived of her fundamental right to parenting without due process when the trial court waived the statutory parental notice requirement after learning that the parent wished to object to the termination of her parental rights. The petitioner for guardianship had failed to make reasonable good faith efforts to locate the parent because the petitioner, when asking the parent for her address and phone number did not tell her the reasons for requesting the address and phone number.

Attorney Notification Requirement in Guardianship Proceedings Under Section 5-322(a) of the Family Law Article of the Maryland Code. Held: A petitioner for guardianship of a child in need of assistance must notify the attorney who represented the parent in the proceeding in which the child was adjudicated a child in need of assistance. This statutory requirement exists even if that attorney had withdrawn her appearance from the case after the adjudication.

Guardian ad Litem

Goldberg v. Miller, No. 8, September Term 2002. Filed November 8, 2002. Opinion by Battaglia, J.

Child support and fees awarded to a guardian *ad litem* under Code of Maryland § 1-202 of the Family Law Article. Held: The Circuit Court erred in entering an order that treated guardian *ad litem* fees as child support. Maryland's statutory scheme for child support makes it clear that only certain expenses may be treated as child support, and guardian *ad litem* fees are not included among those expenses. Furthermore, such treatment would permit guardians *ad litem* to collect their fees through the court's contempt power, thereby potentially placing attorneys' fees in competition with other child support obligations.

Court of Special Appeals

Marital Property

Otley v. Otley, No. 1266, September Term, 2001. Filed November 1, 2002. Opinion by Eyler, J.

Unvested corporate stock options can constitute marital property. The marital portion of unvested stock options can be determined by application of a coverture fraction. Generally, this may be determined by comparing (1) the amount of time the employee spouse was employed, during marriage and after acquisition of the option, to (2) the amount of time the employee spouse was employed, from the date of acquisition of the option to the date of vesting.

Around Maryland



Dorchester

The Circuit Court for Dorchester County has initiated **Status Review Hearings** in family cases. These hearings are held once a month on a day when the *pro se* clinic is open. With this arrangement, litigants who need assistance with cases may be directed to the clinic to receive form filing and legal advice from the scheduled attorney. With the initiation of these hearings, cases that were inactive due to confusion or mis-communication are now being accelerated.

Kent

A collaborative effort has been forged with Kent Family Center through the implementation of a menu of educational seminars for young, single parents offered on-site. Circuit Court Family Services provided a **CD-ROM parenting course called "Parenting Wisely for Parents of Young Children,"** which is now available for individual or group use during daytime or evening hours at the Kent Family Center. "Parenting Wisely" is a skills-based parenting education program and satisfies three hours of divorce education.

Queen Anne's

On December 12, 2002, the Circuit Court for Queen Anne's County held its annual **Foster Care Christmas Event**. The celebration was held at Corbaley Hall in Centreville. Activities included a turkey dinner with all the trimmings, a visit from santa and his elf assistant, gifts for each child and entertainment provided by the county Department of Social Services. Foster care children and their foster care families attended and a great time was had by all!

Somerset

Sports Program for Somerset County Challenged Youths. Karen R. Brimer, the Family Services Coordinator for Somerset County Circuit Court and Jacquelin Wheatley, mother of a mentally challenged child, recognized the lack of athletic programs for children who may have a physical and/or learning disabilities, mental retardation, blindness, Down syndrome and a lack of concentration skills.

Through the support of Judge Daniel M. Long, Ms. Brimer and Ms. Wheatley wrote a grant request through the Community Foundation of the Eastern Shore, Inc. and were awarded \$500. Funds will be used to permit the children to attend a Delmarva Shorebirds game in Salisbury and the Little League Challenger Tournament in Norfolk, Virginia. Other activities, including softball, swimming and

aerobics at the YMCA of the Lower Shore, are planned. Many contributions have been made by civic organizations and the Department of Recreation and Parks. Agencies have been notified, and are encouraged to refer special needs children residing in the county.

Family Services will provide a "soft match," including staff time and clerical support. The county is moving forward in a progressive way to provide services to the challenged children and their parents. Wish us good luck.

Washington

On October 18, 2002 in Hagerstown there was a **GAL Seminar** presented by The Children of Separation and Divorce Center, Inc. The event was co-sponsored by the Washington County Circuit Court and local bar, along with Allegany County Circuit Court and Frederick County Circuit Court. The seminar was open to attorneys, judges and masters in the western region, free of charge. Forty persons attended the seminar.

On January 3, 2003 the **Safe Haven Child Transfer Center** will be opening in Washington County. It will be located at the First Christian Church in Hagerstown. The Center will be open every other Friday and Sunday evenings.

Southern Maryland

Through a grant from MACRO, the First Judicial Circuit sponsored a **20-hour marital property mediation training** for all currently approved circuit court mediators who are now required to have the additional training per the rule change effective July 1, 2002. The training was held January 15-17, 2003 on the campus of Salisbury University.

C Child Support Information for Spanish Speakers Online

Child support information is available for Spanish speakers through the website of the Administration for Children and Families. The site offers information on how to work with the local support enforcement office to locate an absent parent, establish paternity, establish support, and enforce an existing order. The information can be found at www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cse/. Click on **Forms, Reports and Other Resources** and select **OSCE Hispanic/Latino** to view a list of Spanish-language resources. It's as easy as uno-dos-tres!

mark your calendar . . .



February 10, 2003	Committee on Family Law Meeting Annapolis	Pamela Ortiz, 410-260-1580
February 12, 2003	Coordinator Meeting	Lisa Craft, 410-260-1580
March 10, 2003	Committee on Family Law Meeting Baltimore	Pamela Ortiz, 410-260-1580
March 14, 2003	Regional Conference: Child Sexual Abuse and the Courts - Salisbury	Robin Warren MCASA 410-974-4507
March 16-19, 2003	30 th National Conference on Juvenile Justice, NCFCJ and National District Attorneys' Association	NDAA, 703-549-9222
March 21, 2003	Regional Conference: Child Sexual Abuse and the Courts - Frederick	Robin Warren MCASA 410-974-4507
March 27-28, 2003	High Conflict Families: A Training For Custody and Mental Health Evaluators	Pamela Ortiz, 410-260-1580
March 28, 2003	Celebrate the Child, the National CASA Conference, Boston, MA	Ed Kilcullen, 410-244-1066
April 14, 2003	Committee on Family Law Meeting Annapolis	Pamela Ortiz, 410-260-1580
April 25, 2003	Regional Conference: Child Sexual Abuse and the Courts - Baltimore City	Robin Warren MCASA 410-974-4507
April 29, 2003	10 th Annual Governor's Conference on Child Abuse and Neglect, Baltimore	Alisa Santucci, SCCAN, 410-767-1841
May 12, 2003	Committee on Family Law Meeting Baltimore	Pamela Ortiz, 410-260-1580
May 13, 2003	Coordinator Meeting	Lisa Craft, 410-260-1580
May 28-31, 2003	AFCC's 40 th Anniversary Conference Change & Challenge: 40 years of Evolution	AFCC, 608-664-3750

Department of Family Administration
PUBLICATIONS ORDER FORM

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